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APPLICATION FOR PATENT

TITLE: SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR GENERATING A CONFIGURATION SCHEMA

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RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] The present application is related to commonly owned and assigned application

Nos.:

09/730,864 entitled *System and Method for Configuration, Management and Monitoring of Network Resources*, filed December 6, 2000;

09/730,680 entitled *System and Method for Redirecting Data Generated by Network Devices*, filed December 6, 2000;

09/730,863 entitled *Event Manger for Network Operating System*, filed December 6, 2000;

09/730,671 entitled *Dynamic Configuration of Network Devices to Enable Data Transfers*, filed December 6, 2000;

09/730,682 entitled *Network Operating System Data Directory*, filed December 6, 2000; and

09/799,579 entitled *Global GUI Interface for Network OS*, filed March 6, 2001;

all of which are incorporated herein by reference.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates to network device interrogation and configuration.

In particular, but not by way of limitation, the present invention relates to systems and methods for interrogating and configuring routers, switches, hubs, and/or optical components.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] Networks, and in particular, the Internet, have revolutionized communications.

Data vital to the continued prosperity of the world economy is constantly being exchanged between end-users over these networks. Unfortunately, the expansion and maintenance of these networks is outpaced by the demand for additional bandwidth. Network equipment is often difficult to configure, and qualified network technicians are in extremely short supply. Thus, many needed network expansions and upgrades must be delayed until these technicians are available. While these upgrades and expansions are pending, end-users continue to suffer poor network performance.

[0004] For example, Cisco™ routers are notoriously difficult to configure--especially in light of the new XML-based interfaces introduced by competitors such as Juniper Networks™. Instead of a user-friendly XML-based interface, Cisco™ uses a cumbersome command line interface (CLI) for its routers. Cisco's™ CLI interface is the result of many years of semi-controlled modifications to its router operating systems and has resulted in a tangled mess of commands and subcommands.

[0005] If Cisco™ attempted to abandon its CLI in favor of the new user-friendly XML-based interface, many years of development and expertise could be lost. Moreover, even if it could develop an XML-based interface, there is presently no economical way to integrate it into the thousands of existing routers. Despite the difficulties in implementing a more user-friendly interface, to remain competitive, Cisco™ and similarly situated companies need to move away from the CLI. However, present

technology does not provide these companies with an acceptable option that allows continued use of its extensive CLI knowledge base while simultaneously providing system administrators with a user-friendly interface, e.g., XML-based interface. Moreover, present technologies do not provide an acceptable way to provide backward compatibility with existing devices.

[0006] Cisco™ is not the only manufacturer to face this interface-upgrade problem. Many manufacturers would like to continue using their existing interface knowledge base while providing system administrators a friendly, consistent interface. Accordingly, a system and method are needed that will allow manufacturers, like Cisco™, to create user-friendly interfaces for both next-generation and existing devices.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0007] Exemplary embodiments of the present invention that are shown in the drawings are summarized below. These and other embodiments are more fully described in the Detailed Description section. It is to be understood, however, that there is no intention to limit the invention to the forms described in this Summary of the Invention or in the Detailed Description. One skilled in the art can recognize that there are numerous modifications, equivalents and alternative constructions that fall within the spirit and scope of the invention as expressed in the claims.

[0008] Embodiments of the present invention can provide a system and method for generating a configuration schema for network devices. Other embodiments can provide

a system and method for configuring network devices using a configuration schema.

These and other embodiments are discussed more fully below.

[0009] In one implementation of the present invention, a system administrator connects and logs into a router--although it could be any network device. The system administrator then places the router in a command extraction mode. For example, with regard to a Cisco™ router, the system administrator can activate a “help” mode that can be navigated to identify commands, subcommands and/or associated bounds. Once the router has been placed in the extraction mode, the primary commands, subcommands and bounds are extracted through an automated process.

[0010] After the commands, subcommands and bounds have been extracted, they can be stored and, if necessary, cleansed. With regard to a Cisco™ router, cleansing is often beneficial because subcommands can be listed multiple times within the “help” structure. For example, the command “peer” might be included twice in the command structure. The first “peer” could be associated with subcommands “A” and “B,” and the second “peer” could be associated with subcommands “C” and “D.” Thus, although the primary command, “peer” is the same in both instances, the subcommands under each “peer” are different. The cleansing step could recognize this dual listing situation, and appropriately associated the “peer” command to specific configuration change activity. In essence, the cleansing step can clarify the definitions of the duplicated subcommands. In other words, the end result of the cleansing could be a single “peer” command that includes the subcommands “A,” “B,” “C,” and “D.”

[0011] When the commands (including subcommands) and bounds have been collected, a configuration schema can be generated using that information. For example, the commands and bounds can be the basis for generating an XML configuration schema that expresses the command hierarchy and the bounds for the commands in a structured format.

[0012] Although schema are generally used to validate commands, in one implementation of the present invention, the configuration schema can be used to generate commands. For example, a configuration command can be retrieved from a Cisco™ router. This configuration command is generally expressed in terms of a CLI-based command structure. Using the XML configuration schema, however, the CLI-based commands can be converted to an XML format, which is significantly more manageable than a CLI-based format. Once the CLI-based command has been converted to an XML format, the XML format of the command can be easily passed between various computers and system administrators in a highly readable, standardized format.

[0013] In another implementation, the schema can be used to generate CLI commands from, for example, XML-based commands. As previously described, the configuration schema contains the commands, command hierarchy and bounds of the various configuration commands. When given a command in XML format, the command information in the configuration schema can be used to reformat the XML-based command into a proper CLI format. Once reformatted into a CLI format, the command

can be pushed out to the appropriate router. Thus, a system administrator could configure such a router without knowing the specifics of the CLI.

[0014] As previously stated, the above-described embodiments and implementations are for illustration purposes only. Numerous other embodiments, implementations, and details of the invention are easily recognized by those of skill in the art from the following descriptions and claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0015] Various objects and advantages and a more complete understanding of the present invention are apparent and more readily appreciated by reference to the following Detailed Description and to the appended claims when taken in conjunction with the accompanying Drawings wherein:

FIGURE 1 is a block diagram of a conventional network;

FIGURE 2 is a block diagram of a conventional router;

FIGURE 3 is a flowchart of a method for generating a configuration schema in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention;

FIGURE 4 is a representation of one storage model for storing configuration schema across different device types, manufacturers, models and operating system versions;

FIGURE 5 is a block diagram of a router constructed in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention;

FIGURE 6 is a block diagram of one embodiment of the present invention;

FIGURE 7 is a block diagram of another embodiment of the present invention;
and

FIGURE 8 is a flowchart of one method for configuring a router using a
configuration schema.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0016] Referring now to the drawings, where like or similar elements are designated with identical reference numerals throughout the several views, and referring in particular to FIGURE 1, it illustrates a block diagram of a conventional network system 100. In this network system 100, end-users 105 are connected to servers 110, which are connected to networking equipment such as hubs, (not shown) optical components 115, and routers 120. Using the networking equipment, end-users 105 associated with different servers 110 can exchange data.

[0017] As new servers 110 and end-users 105 are added to the overall system 100, or as new software becomes available, the routers 120 and/or optical components 115 of the network system 100 may need reconfiguring. To reconfigure these components, a system administrator 125--with the proper authorization--could access the router 120 and/or optical component 115 by, for example, establishing a telnet connection to the component and transferring configuration instructions thereto.

[0018] Referring now to FIGURE 2, it is a block diagram of a conventional router. In this representation, a processor 125 is connected to a configuration interface 130, an

operating system (OS) storage module 135, a command storage module 140, a configuration storage module 145, and a routing module 150. The illustrated arrangement of these components is logical and not meant to be an actual hardware diagram. Thus, the components can be combined or further separated in an actual implementation. Moreover, the construction of each individual component is well-known to those of skill in the art.

[0019] When a system administrator 125 wishes to reconfigure a router 120, he accesses the router 120 through the configuration interface 130 and retrieves the present configuration for the router 120 from the configuration storage module 145. The system administrator 125 can review available configuration commands and bounds--usually in a CLI format--by accessing and reviewing the commands stored in the command storage module 140. In essence, the command storage module 140 provides the knowledge base for a "help" screen. The commands stored in the command storage module 140 are generally unique to the particular OS version stored in the OS module 135.

[0020] After the system administrator 125 has constructed the new configuration instructions, these instructions are pushed through the configuration interface 130 and stored in the configuration storage module 145. For Cisco™ routers, interaction is generally through a CLI. In other words, the command storage module 140 is queried through the CLI; available commands are returned through the CLI; and new configuration commands are provided to the router 120 through the CLI. Unfortunately,

the CLI is difficult to manage and requires highly skilled technicians for even simple tasks.

[0021] Referring now to FIGURE 3, it is a flowchart of one method for generating a configuration schema in accordance with the principles of the present invention. The illustrated method can be used, for example, to generate an XML schema from the CLI commands associated with a Cisco™ router. In accordance with the principles of the present invention, one method for constructing a configuration schema involves a system administrator 125 (in conjunction with an automated system) connecting to a router 120 through, for example, a telnet connection. Next, the system administrator 125 logs into the router 120 and activates a command extraction mode (steps 160 and 165). With regard to a Cisco™ router, the command extraction mode is activating by entering a “?” at the prompt. Next, the system administrator 125 retrieves the primary commands, subcommands and bounds (steps 170, 175 and 180). This retrieval can be done through an automated, recursive search. For a Cisco™ router, the following search could be executed and the following results returned where ">" is the CLI prompt:

```
> ?  
router  
admin  
global  
> router?  
bgp  
ospf  
>
```

This process could be repeated until termination for each command and subcommand.

The output of a retrieval process, called a text file, for the “service” command is shown in attached Appendix A.

[0022] Once the commands, subcommands, and bounds are collected, they can then be recorded and cleansed (steps 185 and 190). Duplicate commands, for example, could be identified. When these duplicate commands include different subcommands and/or bounds, a single, cleansed command can be constructed to replace the duplicate commands. The cleansed commands, assuming that cleansing was necessary, can then be used to build a configuration schema, which in essence is a modeling of the router’s command structure (step 195). An example snippet of such a modeling in an XML schema is represented by:

```
<xsd:element name="vlan">
  <xsd:complexType>
    <xsd:choice>
      <xsd:sequence>
        <xsd:element name="mapping">
          <xsd:complexType/>
        </xsd:element>
        <xsd:element name="dot1q" fixed="dot1q">
          <xsd:complexType/>
        </xsd:element>
        <xsd:element name="ARG.001">
          <xsd:simpleType>
            .
            .
            .
          </xsd:choice>
        </xsd:complexType>
      </xsd:element>
    </xsd:choice>
  </xsd:complexType>
</xsd:element>
```

A more detailed example of an XML configuration schema is shown in Appendix B. The configuration schema in Appendix B corresponds to the “service” command, which is represented in Appendix A.

[0023] In one embodiment, the conversion between the text file, such as the one shown in Appendix A, and the XML configuration schema is performed by a Visual Basic program. This program identifies arrays of related commands in the text file. Individual arrays can be identified, for example, because they are generally separated by termination characters or by logical termination indicators. Additionally, when an input indicator is encountered in the text file, the program can insert a placeholder into the configuration schema to represent the input indicator. This placeholder can then be associated with the bounds for that particular input. For example, if the input corresponding to the input indicator should be between 1 and 10, a bound of 1 to 10 can be associated with the placeholder.

[0024] After the configuration schema has been generated, it is associated with characteristics of the router and stored accordingly (steps 200 and 205). For example, the configuration schema might be associated with a Cisco™ router, model 7500, OS version 12.0. A representation of a storage model 210 for storing configuration schema according to manufacturer, device type, device model, and OS version is shown in Figure 4. The first data block 215 is dedicated to Cisco™ routers as indicated in the upper left-hand corner. Each row represents a different model of Cisco™ device, and each column

represents a different OS version. Similarly, the second data block is for Juniper™ routers 220 and the third is for Ciena™ devices 225.

[0025] Referring now to FIGURE 5, it is a block diagram of a router 230 constructed in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. In this embodiment, a converter 235 and schema storage module 240 are added to the router of FIGURE 2. The router 230 is generally configured to interface with the system administrator 125 through the configuration interface. Even though the router 230 operates through a CLI configuration interface, a system administrator 125 can reconfigure such a router using XML-based commands--assuming the configuration schema stored in the schema storage module 240 is an XML schema. For example, a system administrator 125 can send an XML-based command to the configuration interface 130. That XML-based command can be passed to the converter 235 which converts the XML-based command to a CLI-based command using the XML schema. A CLI-based command, not the XML command, can then be passed to the configuration storage module 145 where it is integrated into the configuration of the router.

[0026] Referring now to FIGURE 6, it is a block diagram 245 of an embodiment of the present invention in which the converter and schema storage 245 are localized within the system administrator 125. Rather than components within the router 120 converting an XML-based command to a CLI-based command, the localized converter 235' and schema storage module 240' convert the XML-based command to a CLI-based command and then transmit the CLI-based command through the network 250 to the router 120.

[0027] Referring now to FIGURE 7, it shows a block diagram 255 of yet another embodiment of the present invention. In this embodiment, the converter 235'' and schema storage module 240'' are distributed relative to both the router 120 and the system administrator 125. Thus, any XML-based configuration commands generated by the system administrator 125 are sent through the network 250 to the converter 235''. Using the configuration schema stored in the schema storage module 240'', the converter 235'' can convert the XML-based command to a CLI-based command and send that command through the network 250 to the router 120.

[0028] FIGURE 8 illustrates one method of operating the system of FIGURE 7. In this method, the converter 235'' initially receives an XML-based configuration command (step 260). The converter 235'' then determines the manufacturer, model and/or OS version for the router 120 to which the command is directed and accesses the appropriate configuration schema for that router 120. The (steps 265 and 270) converter 235'' then generates a CLI-based command from the XML-based command, verifies the correctness and validity of that command, and provides it to the router 120 (steps 275 and 280).

[0029] Although the embodiments of the present invention are generally described with regard to a router and in particular with regard to Cisco™ routers, one skilled in the art can understand that the embodiments of the present invention can incorporate routers from most router manufacturers and many other types of network components such as hubs, switches, and optical components. Thus, those skilled in the art can readily recognize that numerous variations and substitutions may be made in the invention, its

use and its configuration to achieve substantially the same results as achieved by the embodiments described herein. Accordingly, there is no intention to limit the invention to the disclosed exemplary forms. Many variations, modifications and alternative constructions fall within the scope and spirit of the disclosed invention as expressed in the claims.

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